

THE GREEN CALDRON

A Magazine of Freshman Writing



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Fate and Theodore Sabin

ALAN GOAD

Rhetoric I, Theme 6, 1947-1948

THE PERIODIC VISITS OF CLARK SIMPSON WERE MUCH alike. He, in a modest way, was something of a wanderer and adventurer, going from one town to another and one job to the next, learning much about the strange ways of men, but collecting few of their possessions. After the greetings of his father, Reverend Herman Simpson, his mother, his brother, and sister were over, invariably his father told him the news of Newton, relating all the little things which had happened since Clark's last visit.

The discussions, usually covering the uninteresting gossip that gives an intimate country newspaper its tone, were always colored with the glimpses of the old Presbyterian minister's view of things in general.

But on this particular return the account had more interest than usual. His father, convinced that Clark didn't wish to talk about himself, had launched into the development of the village comedy since Clark's last appearance. He spoke after a little of a revival which he had been holding.

"I have scored something of a triumph," he was saying, smiling a little, with a trace of cynicism which he infrequently allowed himself. "Fifty have been converted—among these, ten who are under twelve and therefore too young, I fear, to know just what the faith is that they have accepted; but as you know my church still subscribes, in the letter at least, to the doctrine of predestination, and the babes must repent with the full-grown sinner. Among the fifty, however, is Theodore Sabin."

"Theodore Sabin converted?" This astonished the younger Simpson. He recalled the old farmer distinctly, though the personalities of most Newton folk were so dim and unvaried as to be soon forgotten during a residence elsewhere. Sabin was the literal triumph of the hold which the soil and self-interest had on the central Illinois farmer. So completely was Sabin a slave to the soil and a worshipper of the American demigod *Toil*, that he went into the fields seven days a week and worked from three in the morning until eight at night. To work on the Sabbath was a misdemeanor against all that was right in the sanctimonious little community.

By such industry steadfastly adhered to through thirty years, he had become the owner of two hundred acres of cornbelt land, barns, stock, and machinery worth, at a low estimate, \$75,000. This fortune did not alter in any way his mode of living; it merely increased the arduousness of his duties. He was not a man to dream of gathering worldly goods in order to live in sensuous ease. He toiled as unremittingly as in his less prosperous days.

Sabin, with his lank figure and his sharply wrinkled face that had somehow taken on the look of a plowed field, was unattractive in mind and body. One studying Sabin and his wife might compare Sabin with his barn—an enormous, neglected dwelling covered with scaling yellow paint—and his wife with the dilapidated farm house with its pitiful effort at adornment made by scraggly trellised vines.

This was Clark Simpson's memory of Sabin, whom he had known from boyhood. Sabin represented the thing that had driven him from Newton to the world outside which had seemed beautiful in comparison.

The conversion of Theodore Sabin seemed half-miraculous to Clark. What magic words had his father invented to awaken a spark of life and feeling in that long-dead heart? The young man asked further explanation.

"I suppose it wasn't anything I said, much as I would like to add that crown to my theology," Reverend Simpson said. "I must thank Providence—Providence in the form of a foundling child which he took from an asylum, more, I fear, with the idea of getting someone without cost to help him on the farm than from any truly generous impulse. But the boy is the most unregenerate and uncontrollable creation of a divine Providence that I have ever encountered.

"This boy," the Reverend went on, "Russel Welker, is a complete failure as far as any hope for assistance on the farm is concerned, but he does gladly second Sabin's view as to the desecration of the Sabbath. He devotes it to fishing. I was surprised that Sabin kept him at all. The lad has easily earned the reputation of being the worst boy in town."

"They sent him back once," Mrs. Simpson put in. "He has the most uncontrollable temper. He threw a rock and hit Loretta (Sabin's daughter) on the forehead. She had refused him a cookie."

"The boy's attitude is not so surprising, since the whole family constantly assures him that he is a very bad boy," Reverend Simpson continued. "They tell him, 'Russel, we'll have to send you to the reform school if you don't try to be a better boy.' But when they actually did send him away, Mrs. Simpson cried constantly, Loretta refused to come out of the house, and Sabin himself did not go to the fields for a day."

"They brought him back in a week," Mrs. Simpson interjected. "At the orphans' home they were told they would have to adopt him this time, and Sabin consented after Russel promised to be a good boy in the future. But he is just as bad as ever, and yet I don't believe they could get along without him."

"They love him, they hate him, but cannot live without him," Reverend Simpson added smiling. "This foundling somehow has reached an unsuspected vein of sentiment in Sabin."

"But what has this to do with the conversion of Sabin?" Clark asked.

"That is easily explained," his father said. "One night Sabin marched in and stalked straight up to the altar. 'I want to be a better man,' he kept

repeating. It got to be painful to me shortly. He was so deeply in earnest, and yet there was something ridiculous in such a man doing a thing like that. It must have taken a violent upheaval of the soul to bring Sabin to cast aside the almost admirable defiance of a lifetime.

"I had been home for an hour later that night when I heard a knock on the door. I opened it wondering who wanted me at that unearthly hour. It was Sabin.

"'I have come to ask you a question,' he said bluntly. 'Must one believe in predestination?'

"Now that has long been a painful point with me as you know. I believe unquestioningly in the need of religion for all men, but it has always been my habit to allow them to make their own dogma. Things necessary for one man are fatal to another.

"I led him into the parlor. 'Now why do you ask?' I inquired.

"'It's Russel,' he broke out, evidently glad of the chance to talk to someone. 'He has broken into a house and stolen some money. I made him take it back and I have gotten the people to promise not to say anything about it. But I am afraid for him. I fear that he is one of those originally damned.'

"I explained to him that this was not necessarily true. I told him as tactfully as possible that perhaps his own habit of making Russel feel that he was bad might have something to do with it."

"'Then you think that there is hope for him if I do what is right?' he asked.

"'I do unquestionably,' I assured him. But he was hard to satisfy, seeming in mortal fear of the fate of that poor child and blaming his own wicked life for this danger to the boy."

"Russel's Carol's fellow," Clark's younger brother broke in, referring to his little sister.

"He is not," Carol denied, a trifle too vehemently.

"I think Russel does like Carol, though I don't believe Carol cares anything for him," Mrs. Simpson said smiling.

Clark doubted his mother's discernment. Budding maidenhood seems to find something appealing in wickedness, and especially was that true in Newton, where exists a monotonous, dead level of goodness. Even Clark was mildly interested in Russel. At ten he had succeeded in getting himself accepted as thoroughly wicked.

The conversation soon switched to other matters. Night closed over the little village. A chilling north wind was sweeping across the fields, through the stark cornstalks from which the grain had been shucked, and across the grey pasture lands. Gray clouds raced overhead driven by the wind. Sleet began beating on the window.

Suddenly there came a beating at the door, double blows of two fists

hammering frenziedly. Reverend Simpson hurried to the door to see the figure of a small boy. He was crying.

"Is Carol here? I want to see Carol," he sniveled.

"What is it you want?" asked the Reverend.

"I can't tell you. I'll tell Carol," he continued to sob. Nothing further could be gotten out of him. But shortly Clark's sister appeared, her hair braided for the night, a cloak thrown over her nightgown.

"What do you want, Russel?" she asked shamefacedly, not going near.

"He's drowned. He drowned in the slough. I wasn't to blame. He fell off the footlog and I couldn't get him out. Now they will send me to the reform school. Don't let them send me."

After some effort, the information was elicited from the half-hysterical boy that Willie Newman had been drowned in the slough. Mrs. Simpson hurried out to tell Mrs. Newman; Clark and his father went to form a searching party. It was ghastly to think of the small boy lost in the muddy, dismal waters of the slough, which ran a mile from town through the ugly bottom lands.

The body had not been found the next morning though the men searched all night. When daylight came they were relieved by a fresh crew who took drags and went up and down the river a hundred yards from the footlogs, raking among the logs and debris at the bottom of the water. But they found no trace of the body.

It was learned that the two boys had been forbidden in the afternoon to go to the bottoms and chase rabbits. Russel, so Mrs. Newman said, had inveigled Willie into going.

"It all comes of that boy. He's bad, just naturally born bad," Mrs. Newman mourned.

A bleak November day dawned, and the first snow of the year was falling, wet snow that was driven along by the wind. Far down the slough a boat was discovered overturned. Nearby was the drowned corpse of the child, caught in the brushwood.

Russel was taken into a room by the grim-faced Sabin, who had not slept since the search began. Sabin was armed with a strap.

"Now you're going to tell me what happened," he told the boy.

There were many black and blue marks on the boy before he told.

"I wanted to take a boat and go rowing, but Willie didn't want to. I said that he was afraid, and he said that he wasn't. So I broke the lock with a rock and got in and told him to, if he wasn't afraid. He got in and we rowed down stream, and then I rocked the boat to scare Willie. It turned over and I hung on but he couldn't; so he drowned."

Sabin himself gave the evidence on which Russel was sentenced to the county industrial school for boys. He told the story grimly. He was never again seen in church.

Imagination and Lil-Lucy

JEAN THEURER

Rhetoric I, Theme 10, 1947-1948

ON THE WAY UPSTAIRS TO LIL-LUCY'S ROOM I THOUGHT that the directions I had been given were unnecessary because I could easily have found it by merely following the sound of the radio. I stopped at the closed door and wondered if my imagination could match Lil-Lucy's. I was sure it could because I rather prided myself on this possession. Just to test it out before meeting my young hostess, I closed my eyes and tried to visualize her. I pictured a round, cuddly, fair-skinned child with big, dreamy blue eyes and loads of blond, curly hair. She would be wearing a fluffy, white organdy pinafore with dainty blue ribbons in her hair and would be sitting on a blue satin chair with one leg tucked under her.

After this, I felt as though I had known Lil-Lucy all my life, and I lifted my hand and knocked gently on the door. There was no answer. I knocked again; still there was no sound other than the tormenting voice of Inner Sanctum. I reasoned that she was too occupied with her program to hear me; so I opened the door very quietly and stepped inside the room. My first glance at her stunned me, and I was frozen to the spot on which I stood. I was vaguely conscious of the fact that the little blonde angel I had just dreamed up was flying away and dissolving into nothingness. With arms folded across her chest, little Lucy stood erect, not more than three feet in front of me.

Lucille Travers was a very severe-looking child with sleek black hair flattened into pigtails, dark eyes, very prominent cheek-bones, and skin of a transparent quality. The agility of her movements made her body seem very loosely put together. In place of the fussy pinafore, she wore a T-shirt and blue jeans. I stood there staring at her. Slowly coming out of my shock, I decided that although Lucy wasn't much to look at right now, there would be a day about eight years from now when she would be something special. I am sure I shivered; it was a great surprise to be greeted by a character like this—so foreign to the little girl I had anticipated. I am not sure she was aware of my presence, for she uttered no sound, registered not a flicker of expression. We both stood motionless for what seemed hours, but was probably a matter of seconds. Lil-Lucy cast a spell over me that was almost hypnotic. I couldn't tear my eyes away from her face. Slowly I became conscious of the music of an Indian war dance floating through the room. Watching Lil-Lucy's face, I could tell from the ever-so-slight twitching of muscles and narrowing of eyes, and from just a suggestion of shoulder movement and body swaying, that she was not in this room at all, but on an Indian reservation with the murderer.

Now the music faded away and dreamily she turned, walked across the room, and squatted Indian fashion on the floor. As I was still standing, I asked Lil-Lucy if I might be seated. There was no response, and I took advantage of the situation, picked myself a good front seat, and relaxed to watch the show.

The following commercial was wasted on Lucy, but I gathered from the announcer that the murderer was a mad pianist who expressed his innermost thoughts and desires in his original music. The scene now shifted to a night club in New York, and the plot was taking shape rapidly. Crime was leaping from every corner, and I felt sure there would have to be a murder quickly. As I watched her face and followed the trend of the music, I felt the slow, even movement of an almost peaceful mind change to madness and race with the accelerated tempo through moods of anger, hate, suspicion, and threat and into a thunderous frenzy of notes which finally exploded into a musical sound which was death.

Lucy flicked off the radio, sprang to her feet, came directly toward me, stared into my face, and asked in a very soft, mysterious voice, "Would you like to go with me into another world?" Not waiting for my answer, she motioned for me to follow her. Quickly she darted up the hall to the attic stairway. I followed closely, thinking, "How queer can an eleven-year-old get?" Reaching the head of the stairs, she pushed heavily on a massive door, which squeaked almost as weirdly as Inner Sanctum's. As we entered the attic, my first thought was that she hadn't exaggerated it a bit; this was another world. I saw things that I never believed existed anywhere other than in the movies.

The attic was a large circular room which looked as though it had been a ballroom during the Civil War period. As Lucy was busily occupied going through a trunk, I hastily tried to take at least one look at everything in the room. This was impossible, but I do remember seeing faded, dusty, Confederate uniforms, stacks of books, crystal candelabra, dress-maker forms, picture frames of all descriptions, and loads of broken furniture. Among the numerous trunks and boxes which I am sure held many lovely party frocks, there were rugs, oil-lamps, milk china, a pile of old hats, and a three-legged needle-point sofa. One section of the wall was almost completely covered with a huge, faded tapestry. A feathered hat, resting inside a battered birdcage, reminded me of the "Bird on Nelly's Hat." With this thought, I started to laugh, but was brought back to Lucy's presence by her remark that it wasn't at all funny. Evidently she had been talking, and I hadn't heard a word she had said. She asked me to come and look at her old trunk. I could tell from her pleased expression that her mind was spinning away into another dream. In a mystical manner she said, "This old chest belonged to my great, great grandfather, who was a pirate and used to run the coast of Maine—and he smuggled this chest into this house ages ago. He wrote a message with blood on a piece of white cloth and left it in here—that's how we knew how it got here and what was in it."

Watching Lil-Lucy's eyes, I was lost in her spell; I went back to those reckless, gay, pirate days. I stood beside the chest, running my hands through the pieces of gold, admiring the priceless jewels, and fingering the beautiful velvet gowns. I slowly became conscious of Lil-Lucy gently pressing my arm and saying, "She was too young to die."

"Who was?" I asked.

"Her," she said, handing me a framed picture, "my great, great, great, great Aunt Kathy." She reached into the trunk and brought out a lovely old dress, whose skirt was made of yards and yards of what was once white satin but was now the color of ivory. There was a deep off-the-shoulder ruffle of filmy lace on the bodice. As I looked at the dress, I thought that the gown had certainly known romance. With the dress thrown over her arm, Lucy reached to the wall over the trunk and brought down a scabbard containing a sword. Keeping the sword in her hand, she gave me the scabbard to hold. Then slowly she went into her trance.

I was so fascinated with her transformation and was concentrating so deeply on the beautiful girl in the picture and on the lovely gown which Lil-Lucy was swishing around her that I lost myself completely. She said, "This was Aunt Kathy's wedding gown. It happened right downstairs in the south parlor. The house was beautiful—with millions of white roses—they were Aunt Kathy's favorite flower—and thousands and thousands of candles were burning—and all the guests were there—and Aunt Kathy and her beloved Charles were standing together at the white rose altar—and the minister was marrying them—and he was just saying, 'If any man knows why these two should not be joined together. . . .' A drunkard, one of Aunt Kathy's rejected lovers, staggered from the group of guests and, swaying forward, pulled out his sword and jabbed it right in the middle of Aunt Kathy's back—and it went right straight through her body and cut her heart in half." With this statement, Lucy charged forward and rammed the sword into the dress-maker form. "As Kathy fell to the floor," continued Lucy, "her beloved Charles grabbed her up in his arms—and as the blood dripped and dripped, she . . ."

A heavy door ground its way slowly open. It was probably the memory of the door of Inner Sanctum in my subconscious mind, strengthened by the fact that I was still in the south parlor with Kathy's dripping blood; it also might have been the startled expression on my face, which I saw reflected in an antique mirror on the wall, that caused my nerves to jam. I screamed and released my hold on the picture frame and the metal scabbard; they fell to the floor with a clang. Lil-Lucy let out a yelp and covered her face with her hands.

We were brought back to the moment by Mrs. Travers' voice calling us for dinner. She ordered Lucy to put the dress away and come downstairs immediately. I still felt a little dizzy from my experience, but Lucy was

normal for the first time since I had seen her. She whisked the gown back into the trunk and scooted past me toward the door saying, "Come on, let's get goin'." When I reached the attic door, I could see Lucy sliding down the bannister. As she bumped the newel post, she gave me a broad smile, waved her hand, and said, "I'll be seein' ya." And with that she was gone.

A God in the House

JOSEPH LEVINSON

Rhetoric I, Theme 10, 1947-1948

I RUSHED BACKSTAGE AS SOON AS THE APPLAUSE BEGAN. I was only eight years old and had trouble forcing my way through the many people standing there; but eight-year-olds have ways and means of pushing through crowds, and I was soon in the arms of my mother. It was hard to tell just who was happier—my mother or I—for the concert was such a success! From the very first note, the new concerto was a thrilling work of art; but, even at the age of eight, I knew that people, usually cruel to composers, were even more cruel to the artists. We were happy, however, for my mother played beautifully (as I knew she would), and, as they walked out, the audience hummed the wonderful theme from the first movement.

Musicians, like all artists, are conscious of the need for celebration. Nobody had to tell me that we would all go home and break out the corned beef, liederkranz cheese, and hot coffee. I knew already that Johanna would have the beer and mugs ready, for Johanna and I always planned the "afterwards party," and no one knew more about such things than the two of us.

Some of my relatives took me home first, and I left the front door open. Everybody knew that the open front door meant success, and they poured in, offering congratulations. Soon my mother and father arrived, followed by musicians, musicians, and more musicians. The wonderful, gay, musical time was beginning!

Nobody quite knew how or when he entered; we all seemed to notice him at once. The party was at its height—the songs were being sung. It was in the midst of a Schubert *Lied* that he came in, and just as suddenly as we saw him, we stopped singing. "Go on, go on!" he said in a rough English. When nobody moved, he began singing, and immediately everyone surrounding him sang too. He was magic—he was a god—so red-faced and smiling, so straight and tall. Tall? He must have been six-feet five. A god? He was a Pied Piper.

He sang and shook hands in a peculiar way when he finished. He sang some more, and toasted my mother in exotic fashion. When he talked, he boomed; when he laughed, he made us laugh.

Then, as usual, the guests asked my mother to play the piano. With a

little persuasion and a shout of "Play the *Love for Three Oranges*" from me, Mother began. This was my favorite "little piece," and I never tired of it. But the music sounded different this time—even more wonderful. I got out of the big corner chair where I was sitting and looked at the piano. Sure enough, my mother was playing. But why was it so vibrant, so unusual? The other piano—of course! I looked at the other piano; HE was there, playing right along with my mother, and getting a kick out of it.

Piece after piece they played. He always laughed; he always knew the piece. He played by himself, and we all were entranced. My poor mother was worn out.

Finally someone said, "Play the concerto."

He looked around. "Which movement?" he asked.

"The first movement," I answered.

"Why the first movement, little one?"

"Because it's the best!" I replied.

He came over and looked at me. He was so big! He picked me up and looked me in the eye. "So you think the first movement is the best, ha?" For a second I was frightened by this powerful individual who was such a god-like person. But his eyes gave him away.

"Well, I think it's the best, too!" he said, and turned toward the guests. "A violinist!" he shouted. "Little fellow is a violinist!"

How did he know I was?

"Come here and shake hands with me," he laughed. What a handshake! I thought I would never play the violin again, he shook so hard. But he played our mutual favorite—the first movement. Oh, how he played the concerto!

Then food. It was immediately evident that this god was really mortal. He ate, quietly but enormously. He consumed nine sandwiches (I counted) and five cups of coffee. He smoked a pipe which looked like a smoke pot, but gave off a wonderful odor. He was not old, not young, but lovable.

When he left, the people left too. Nothing could have replaced him. I never saw him again; probably I never will. But you and I will hear him always. For, you see, he wrote the Third Piano Concerto, which my mother played that evening; he wrote the *Love for Three Oranges*, which was my favorite "little piece." But perhaps children will love him best of all for his *Peter and the Wolf*. You see, his name is Serge Prokofieff.

Mississippi Quonset Hut

The sun beat down from the meridian. The quonset hut felt swollen with heat. The morning breezes had been dead for five hours—the evening breezes were still hours and miles away. There was no work, no talk, and no ambition—nothing had happened for hours. Outside, dried-up earthworms on the rotted boardwalks gave legal proof that there was little chance for survival on such a day as this in southern Mississippi.

—KENNETH WOOD

Of Sticks and Stones

WILLIAM PISTRUI

Rhetoric II, Theme 7, 1947-1948

MANY YEARS AGO CLARENCE CAVEDWELLER WAS SIT-
ting in his cave, gnawing on the leg of a stag that he had killed several weeks before. But on that day Clarence wasn't slobbering away at his meal with the usual gusto. His eyes showed deep meditation as he slowly tore bits of raw flesh from the large bone that he had gripped firmly in his hand.

For twenty-two years Clarence had lived in that cave and had been tormented by the cold wind whipping in from its mouth—to say nothing of the cold damp floor on which he had to sit. Finally Clarence threw the bone aside, belched loudly, and walked briskly out of his cave. Clarence was going to build a house. With the required amount of tree trunks, mud, straw, and labor, Clarence pieced together a little hut that served much better to keep out the cold wind, and that had a warmer floor. Now, mind you, Clarence was proud of his achievement, and, being no different from the people today, he invited his neighbors over to see what he had made. With a touch of cynicism they drew out of their caves to view the work of Clarence. They nodded in agreement when Clarence said that it would keep out the cold wind. They even placed their hands on the floor when Clarence said that it was not as cold and damp as the cave's. But, even though it had these advantages, the hut had one outstanding fault that made the neighbors refuse to accept it. It didn't look like a cave.

Later, in the year 1946, C. Cavedweller Jones, a direct descendant of Clarence, also decided to build a house. And, being like his ancestor, he too wanted his house to provide him with the maximum comforts and conveniences.

Mr. Jones immediately set out to plan his house. Having already acquired his lot, he started sketching possible positions for his house in relation to the lot. Being a lover of nature, he didn't want his lot cut up into a half-dozen sections by numerous sidewalks and driveways.¹ Like many people, Jones thought it would be nice to have a large front lawn. So, he set his house about two-thirds of the way back on his lot, and he smiled to himself because of his clever foresight. Yes sir, that was going to be a front lawn that would make every neighbor on the street envious. However, the more he looked, the less satisfied he became. The rear of the house was scarcely twenty feet from the alley. In this tiny area he wanted to have his summer terrace and barbecue

¹ Simon Breines, *The Book of Houses* (New York, 1946), p. 59.

pit. He also wanted a small flower garden, but the area that was left him was hardly large enough to hang the family wash. "To hell with the front lawn," said Jones, as he moved his house up toward the front of the lot.²

Now that Mr. Jones was satisfied with his lot arrangement, he began to sketch the interior. His enthusiasm made him somewhat careless, however, and when he finished he found that he had overlooked putting in a door to the bathroom and had completely forgotten about clothes closets. A little discouraged, Mr. Jones started again. This time he didn't do any sketching at all; instead, he began writing down the activities and necessities of every member of the family. Then he cautiously began to rearrange his interior, referring at various intervals to his sheet of activities to see if his plan was providing for them.³ Mr. Jones also had to arrange the rooms to make it convenient for his wife to get from one place to another while she was cleaning.⁴ He had to be careful not to make the outside shape of his house too irregular, for fifty percent of the cost of his house would be spent on the outside walls.⁵ Then, too, Mr. Jones had to pay particular attention to the approximate sizes and shapes of his rooms, to avoid getting his rooms too long and narrow, or too much like a square.⁶ Trying to sketch a floor plan with all these restrictions was indeed no simple task. Mr. Jones' only method was trial and error. After ninety-one trials, ninety errors, and one hundred swear words, he finally completed a plan that lay within the restrictions.

The most difficult part of his planning was now complete. An excited impatience drove Mr. Jones on as he proceeded to complete the details of the interior and put the finishing touches on his work of art.

He looked first at his living room. He knew that it would be the most used room in the house. Therefore, he particularly wanted to make it convenient for every one of its uses.⁷ Once again he looked at his activity sheet. There he saw that the living room would have to provide for his wife's bridge parties and his daughter's entertaining, as well as for his own reading and leisure.⁸ He saw that the first two required a considerable amount of space, and although his living room was twelve by eighteen, he knew that he would still have to find ways to save space. By this time the wheels in Mr. Jones' head were revolving furiously, and as he inhaled deeply from his pipe, he felt that his creative ability was second only to Frank Lloyd Wright's. "I'll install built-in furniture wherever possible," said Mr. Jones.⁹ With the thrill of a child making mud pies, he sketched in several wall sofas with storage space beneath. In a secluded corner he sketched in a set of wall shelves for his books, and within this unit he also put several drawers as well as a recess for

² *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴ Clarence W. Dunham, *Planning Your Home for Better Living* (New York, 1945), p. 42.

⁵ H. V. Walsh, *Let's Plan a Home* (Toledo, 1945), p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23. ⁷ Dunham, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

⁸ George Nelson and Henry Wright, *Tomorrow's House* (New York, 1945), pp. 16-8.

⁹ Breines, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

his radio. He then meditated over his plan. It was still rather barren. To correct this, he placed a love-seat facing the fireplace and two soft easy chairs near the wall unit that housed his books and radio.¹⁰ Now the living room could really be lived in. Without moving a single piece of furniture, his wife would have room for four tables of bridge. Daughter could hold her shindigs with very little furniture-moving. All she needed was to have the love-seat turned around to face the center of the room. Mr. Jones frowned slightly when he saw that he could not use the living room while his wife and daughter were holding their activities. But, he just had to be satisfied with hoping to have it for at least three nights a week.

Next Mr. Jones' eyes turned toward the kitchen. He knew that his wife would spend most of her time there; so he tried to make things as convenient as possible for her. Turning once again to his activity sheet, he saw that not only cooking, but light washing, ironing, sewing, and eating would also have to be done in the kitchen.¹¹ That meant that the kitchen had to have plenty of storage space. He smirked again as he erased one of the wall partitions dividing the kitchen from the dining room, and in the place he put a built-in storage cabinet the entire length of the wall.¹² Being satisfied with this, he arranged his sink, work tables, refrigerator, and range in the shape of a "U" so that his wife could stand in one place and touch practically everything she needed while preparing a meal.¹³ This left plenty of room for a breakfast nook. Mr. Jones gloated with pride. But making cabinets out of his dining room partitions decreased the size of his already-too-small dining room. With several more strokes of his eraser, he took out the partition between the dining and living rooms. Now he had a dining and living room combined. Once again Mr. Jones grunted with satisfaction.

Having the living room, the dining room, and kitchen well under hand, Mr. Jones turned his attention toward the bathroom. The area he had provided for it was a good deal larger than the usual five-by-seven bathrooms that barely provided the minimum areas for the fixtures. From the activity sheet Mr. Jones found that the wife and the daughter did quite a bit of their primping in the bathroom. If he made it large and pleasant enough, perhaps, by the element of suggestion, he could induce them into doing *all* of their primping in the bathroom. So, he sketched in a lavatory with a counter on each side for combs, hair brushes, and bobby-pins. Over this he drew a bold line that was supposed to represent a large mirror.¹⁴ In this unique creation he had overlooked one thing. If his wife and daughter did all their primping in the bathroom, he wouldn't have time to use the shower. However, Mr. Jones' wheels were still working, and he took care of the situation by several

¹⁰ Nelson and Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-7.

¹¹ Dunham, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹² Breines, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹³ Dunham, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁴ Nelson and Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

more strokes of the pencil. These were supposed to represent partitions, putting the lavatory, the tub, and the toilet each in an individual compartment. This made it possible for three people to use the bathroom at once.¹⁵

By this time Mr. Jones' enthusiasm was at its highest. He was perfectly satisfied with his accomplishments so far, and after a quick look at the bedrooms, he would have his plan complete. His pencil went to work again as he made a trial sketch for locating his furniture. The bed could be put only in one position, and, after he drew in the bureaus and chiffoniers, he found that his bedroom seemed terribly cramped and junky.¹⁶ "Let's see," said Mr. Jones to himself. "I solved the space problem in the living room with built-in sofas. I did the same in the kitchen with built-in cabinets. I wonder—heh, heh, heh!" Yes, Mr. Jones was going to design a built-in bureau with drawers flush with the wall. Having this completed, he found the bedroom a trifle bare. There was an empty corner that seemed to be wasted. Then Jones shrieked with delight as he furiously drew his symbols for an easy chair, a desk, and small book shelves.¹⁷ He drew them with such haste that it seemed as though he was afraid the idea would leave him before he got it down on paper. When he finished, he was still breathing hard, but bubbling with self-satisfaction. Now he had an escape from the bridge parties and shindigs. The plan was complete.

Needless to say, Mr. Jones had the house built as quickly as possible. When it was finished, he did the same as his ancestor, Clarence. The neighbors drew out of their cute colonial dwellings, their Old English cottages, and their ornate Victorian houses. Poor Jones' house was showered with criticism. "Sure, it is very convenient for living, but who ever heard of such a large bathroom, and how can that poor wife rearrange furniture three times a week with built-in sofas?" But, worst of all, it didn't look like anything people used to live in one hundred years ago. Mr. Jones, however, had worked too hard on his design to be affected by such criticism. He simply told them all to go to the same place where he sent his large front lawn.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

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The Year I Grew Up

PATRICIA WILLIAMSON

Rhetoric I, Theme 10, 1947-1948

DURING MY EIGHTEENTH SUMMER, I DECIDED I NEEDED a job. I made a charming call on the superintendent of the Alton Recreation Department and poured out the details of the wide scope of my experience. Whether my speech really impressed him or whether the department was just badly in need of directors, I will never know. A few months later I was the director of Water Tower playground.

Water Tower—a living jumble of indignant, freckle-faced boys, dirty babies, lovers who cuddled in the shade of the poplar trees next to the bleachers, sweet five-year-old girls in starched yellow, loafers who never said more than five words without a “Damn” or a “Hell,” teasing teen-agers, frizzy blondes with red blouses and pink skirts which allowed too much of the knees to show, tall muscular ball players, lost little brothers, prominent business men who followed the city leagues with keen interest, and friends of mine who often paid me sympathetic calls to see if my cerebrum still served the function for which nature intended it. Water Tower—a civilization within itself!

Before the season opened, all the prospective directors attended a series of lectures on handicraft, games, first aid, and theories of youthful punishment. The climax of this training was a grand field day at Water Tower playground, during which Alton's eighteen directors received final instructions before they opened their individual playgrounds. My first impression of Water Tower was as dramatic as the summer itself.

We were sitting around the long table in the shelter house while Mr. Bean explained how to apply a tourniquet. I had been surveying my new home. There was a piano in the room which had a rather nice tone if I didn't happen to need low Bb, middle C, or the F# above it. In the basement, were a ping-pong table and some showers. A certain odor which reminded me somewhat of a sewer persisted, but if I tried to concentrate on something nice, I could forget it. About ten open windows bordered the walls of the room, and outside I could catch a glimpse of groups of children venturing closer to the house. A boy with a bushy burr and freckles pushed his head in the window while his blazing-faced buddy stood behind him singing. At another window, a medium-sized blond stuck his foot upon the window sill and climbed into the room. His eyes questioned us for a moment, waiting to see whether we would scold his boldness. Then he motioned to three friends, who immediately forced their heads through the window too.

Mr. Bean paused in his directions and scratched his head a minute. He was a man whom I have never known to speak a harsh word until absolutely

all other known psychological theories have been attempted. "Boys," he ventured, still contemplating a bit over the situation, "if you want to listen to what we're saying, come in and have a seat."

The words had been spoken. That was the encouragement for which they longed. Within three minutes, about fifteen little boys had shoved their way through the open windows, dragged the metal folding chairs around the room, placed a few blows on each others' ears, and perched themselves at various points around us. My eyes wandered over the group and I forced my lips into a quaint smile. After all, I was almost going to live with this brigade all summer, and it would rather help if they liked me. One long lad slumped in a chair near the table, a cigarette jammed between his teeth and his hair waving over his eye to give him an appearance of Veronica Lake with masculine traits. Smoking among the children had been strictly forbidden for years, but who was I to speak at this stage?

Mr. Bean took a deep breath. "Now," he continued, "the important thing to remember is to put the tourniquet between the wound and the heart."

"Ouch! You crook!" Behind me an inflamed boy landed a blow on his companion's Adam's apple. "I'll get even with you for that hot foot," he wailed, swinging madly. On the other side of the room, a clashing of giggles parted the air. Three nearly grown boys took turns playing with one of the girl director's curls, much to her embarrassment and helplessness.

Mr. Bean bit his lip. "Boys," he announced in a firm voice, "I am afraid you all better go outside. We have work to do to make a real summer for you. Come on, all of you."

Several of the smaller boys stirred and a few moved toward the door, but the big boy with the Veronica Lake hair style folded his arms neatly on his lap while his expression dared Mr. Bean to make a further command.

"Boys," Mr. Bean's voice was still within its normal range, "I asked you to leave. Let's make a good impression on your new directors."

The boys seemed impervious to his orders. After an awkward silence, several of the men directors volunteered themselves to the task of grabbing some of the problems by the arms and pulling. This was halfway successful. Most of the boys under eight, who did not as yet know more than their school teachers and parents, giggled and scampered out of the shelter house, but the big boy with the hanging hair smiled as I had once seen a dead end kid smile in the movies, and stamped his foot.

"Boys," Mr. Bean bellowed, "I said to leave."

Two husky six-foot directors approached the difficult boy on either side and tugged at his shoulders. He sprang to his feet and glared at them. A series of words, which I had not heard before at the time, but which furthered my education through the summer, followed, and he was flung from the room. His buddies followed in similar fashion.

The directors immediately raced around the room, closing and locking all the windows. Four physical education majors threw all their weight on the door, holding it against the force of the opposing juvenile mob on the other side. At last, it was locked. Harsh threats and vile words squeezed into the room through the closed window. Two dirty girls pounded on the glass.

Instead of helping to chase them out, I only sat in the same chair I had occupied all afternoon and stared at my feet. I wasn't the fainting type fortunately, or I surely would have keeled over. My brain whirled round and round trying to grasp, to realize the events which had just occurred. They talked about problems! Discipline! How would I survive the summer? These urchins would kill me! Suddenly I looked up and realized all eyes were upon me. The boys held mischievous grins, but the girls showered me with tender expressions such as they might give a mother whose only son lay ill in the hospital. Poor Patsy! The murmur drifted through the room. Poor Patsy!

This was my introduction to Water Tower. This was my first impression of Alton's big, rough playground. It was difficult to relax over the weekend and look forward to a summer of interesting work. Monday was a big day. Monday, the eight-week playground season would open.

If my first impression of Water Tower was a nightmare, my first day was a living Hades. Before I applied for the job, friends had cautioned me that the class of people that generally roams the playgrounds is sometimes hard to control. My wildest dreams did not picture the scene which took place the first day.

At 7:00 P. M., Bob, my fellow director, and I decided it was time to close the shelter house, which seemed ready to explode any minute from the concussion of shouts and stomping within. Exactly one hour later, it was empty. With the help of two older boys, I chased each individual child around the room, dragged him to the door, which Bob was guarding, and literally threw him out into the horde of children who were fighting to re-enter. Every now and then someone would push past Bob, and the long struggle of catching him would begin all over again.

I couldn't sleep very well that night. Being naturally a peace-loving girl, I couldn't relish the prospect of yelling—bickering—punching all summer.

The story of Water Tower cannot be told in a single article. To repeat the tale of laughter, quarrels, thrills, and tears of that summer, I could fill the pages of a good-sized novel. Here, I can tell only a few of the events—the ones which I will remember the longest.

The Recreation Department issued to the grounds some equipment which included a box of textile paints, an expensive vibra-tool, scrap metal, and yarn. This was supposed to lead to some elaborate form of art work. I surveyed my hoodlums and laughed at the thought. If I could control them, I would be happy.

Whenever I removed the material from the cupboard, either a jar of paint or the scissors always seemed to disappear and somehow find their way into the hands of an eight-year-old girl named Margaret Linden. Margaret! Of all the fighting, senseless kids, she drove me the nearest to the psychologist's office. Margaret didn't own a comb, and there was always an old streak of dirt on her neck.

One day Margaret's older sister, Ruth, came to me with blood creeping over her foot. I calmly applied iodine, for a cut foot was an everyday occurrence on the playground. There was always broken glass to wedge into tiny feet even though some of them were so tough they could run through gravel without the slightest pain.

"Margaret," I begged, "Ruth shouldn't walk home with this cut on the bottom of her foot. It is liable to become infected. Please run home and get her shoes."

Margaret pulled on her faded dress, which swung above her dark panties. "No," she whimpered, "I won't go home and get *her* shoes."

"Margaret," I burst out, "your sister has cut her foot. You live only two blocks away."

Margaret whined, "No, I won't go home for her. She wouldn't for me."

"Margaret, your sister's hurt. She's hurt."

"No, I won't."

I stormed, "Haven't you any concern for your sister? Haven't you any sense?"

She raised her chin and laughed.

I groaned and said a few words to myself that I had picked up that summer. I knew it was useless to talk to Margaret's little sister, Christine, or Robbie, the young brother. He had a permanent dirt cake plastered on his face, and all he ever seemed to think about was doing what was forbidden. I tried to persuade some of the other children, but the ones who were anxious to help me wouldn't venture into the Lindens' household for fear their mothers would find out and make them bathe in Lysol. As a result, I reached a decision. I would borrow one of the bicycles and ride Ruth home myself.

Margaret ran up to the bicycle and wailed, "Are you going to take her home?"

I hardly felt like talking to her. "Yes," I lamented, "I'm taking her home."

I pedaled out of the park. Suddenly, I realized we were being followed and turning, I saw, to my disgust, a small girl tagging after us.

"Margaret," I shouted, "don't you dare come home with us now. I begged you to go before."

She laughed and chewed a wad of grass.

I glared at her and resumed my pumping. Across the wide street and down a tar road into the hollow we went. I raced past rows of humble cottages and

went to the city schools; the drunken fathers roamed the city streets; and the shiftless mothers shopped at the city groceries.

It was of no concern to the city, and of much less concern to me. The old men, pushing their carts of junk, glared at me as I rode by in my Buick; some of the kids threw stones; and no one looked civilized—to me. Two or three excursions were enough to convince me that I wanted no more of that, but I wrote my paper very piously, being careful to stress the need for eradication of the slums—not because I thought “those people” deserved anything better, but because I knew that was what the teacher wanted. And when grades were pending, who was I to argue?

Christmas vacation came, and I forgot about the slums, at least for a while. It was a very short while, because before long I was “roped” into giving baskets of food, clothing, and toys to the poor in the slums. On Christmas Eve, with the car loaded down with wagons, skates, dolls, and about twelve boxes of food, we set out. The first stop was at the Farleys’, a dilapidated, two-room brick house. The foundation was made of loosely-piled stone blocks set in the same soft mud that clung to our shoes as we walked through the cluttered yard. As I stepped in the door, a large chest piled high with everything imaginable confronted me. This was situated in the hall. To the right was a kitchen; I could tell by the small burner and the homemade table. To the left was the bedroom with one bed. And then I looked at the family: a grandmother, a father, a mother, and nine children. The floor didn’t even look large enough to hold them. I can’t describe the stifling odor that pervaded those two rooms, but it made me feel as if I were in an air-tight box with nothing but musty clothing to inhale. Dickie Farley interrupted my thoughts by grabbing the loaf of bread from the box of food, which I had just set on the table. He tore off the end wrapper and dashed out the door. Dickie was in my little sister’s room at school, and now I knew why she thought he was “dumb.” I knew why he came to school early and roamed the neighborhood at night. Even an eight-year-old would want to get away. I wanted to, and we did.

The rest of the “homes” were much the same: one or two rooms, a bed or so, a few cooking facilities, no water, no electricity, ten to fifteen kids. This time, instead of taking a fleeting glance, I was forced to stand on the inside and look out. I saw a different picture and a different people. Some were proud, and some were humble. Some were resentful, but some were thankful. I also discovered that the little “hoodlums” were hungry—for food, for toys, and for friends.

That Christmas Eve I received a new outlook on some of the unhappy people. I saw the drunken father as a little boy, who had a drunken father, who as a little boy had a drunken. . . . I saw the untidy, filthy mother as a little girl, who had an untidy, filthy mother, who as a little girl. . . . It was

almost a caste system in our own free America. They were born of low caste, and that's where most of them stayed. They had the opportunities, but no one bothered to teach them how to use their opportunities. It was true they went to the public schools until they were sixteen, but for eighteen hours out of every twenty-four they lived among people whose chief aim in life was to get "stewed" every Saturday night. It was true they had freedom of speech, but practically all they heard was cursing. They had freedom of religion, but what was religion? They had all the rights given to them by the Constitution, but they were hungry. I finally came to the realization that the slums are creating criminals, and not criminals slums. We carry on extensive campaigns to wipe out the breeding places of harmful insects, and yet we let the slums go unmolested year after year.

I was in a very pensive mood as I helped decorate our Christmas tree late that Christmas Eve. I slowly began to unwrap the Christmas ornaments. I nonchalantly scanned the front page of a newspaper on top of one of the boxes: "Youths Steal Car," "Drunk Slays Wife," "Boy Held on Murder Charge," "Stewarts Hold Celebration." I stopped there and read the article. "The Stewarts, leading family . . . , held a gigantic Christmas party. . . . No expense was spared." I thought of Dickie, of drunken Jacobs, of old lady Jones and her twelve kids. . . . I read again: "NO EXPENSE WAS SPARED."

The Intersection

DONALD E. ARMSTRONG

Galesburg Division, Rhetoric I, Theme 5, 1947-1948

THE TRAFFIC SIGNAL FLASHED A SCARLET WARNING TO the hurrying motorists. I stepped on the brake pedal quickly and felt the car respond. It slowed to a stop at the intersection. Automatically I shifted the gears into neutral and glanced down the tree-lined boulevard. The bright sunlight cascaded through the branches of the trees and was reflected in multicolored splashes of light from the dozens of cars scurrying up and down the road.

The large trees along either side of the road arched so far out over the pavement that I seemed to be in an enormous tunnel. Their massive trunks formed a gigantic picket fence, behind which nestled rows of neat, suburban homes, shaded by the leafy roof overhead. The gnarled and aged trunks of the trees seemed to form a protective barrier secluding the dwellings from the rest of the world.

A little girl skipped happily along the sidewalk, her golden pigtails dancing on her shoulders, like puppets on a string. Suddenly a boy darted from behind a tree and jerked one of the pigtails impishly. With a squeal of pain and anger, the little girl turned on her tormentor. As she stamped her foot in rage, the boy ran down the street laughing merrily. The little girl turned and trudged on up the street, her recent joy dimmed by the boy's thoughtless prank.

On the corner stood a middle-aged man with a lunch bucket under his arm. His clothes were those of a laboring man. His trousers were smudged with grease and dirt as if he had been lying on the ground under a car. His hands were large and rough, the hands of a worker. His shoulders drooped slightly with weariness and with his load of worldly cares and responsibilities. His face was etched deeply with age's distinguishing lines. And his cap, pulled low, shaded two weary eyes that turned to search the street for the approach of his bus.

My eyes wandered across to the opposite corner, following the graceful movements of an attractive young woman who was approaching the crossing. Her high-heeled step click-clicking along the sidewalk accented the carefree swing of her arms. A well-shaped face, outlined by soft masses of chestnut-colored hair, seemed to radiate charm and shower good will on everyone she met.

The brazen blast of an auto horn jerked my eyes to the center of the intersection. An ancient, battered car, piloted by an old, gray-haired man, slid to a stop as a shiny limousine sped possessively across its path. In a moment the limousine had disappeared on down the street. With a jerk the aged machine started up again, and the old man drove on down the street.

"Ding-ding-ding," chimed a small bell. At a gas station on the corner an attendant was filling the tank of a car with gasoline. The tiny bell continued to ring each time a gallon of fuel was delivered. Suddenly gasoline gushed from the mouth of the tank and ran down the fender of the car. The attendant quickly shut off the gas, replaced the hose on its bracket, and screwed the gas tank cap into place. He walked to the front of the car and scrubbed at the windshield with a rag for a moment or two. The driver handed him a bill, and after much fumbling and searching through his pockets, he found the necessary change. As the car drove away, he turned to another customer.

A sharp horn blast from behind me startled me, and I glanced at the traffic signal. It was green. Quickly I shifted the gears into low and let out the clutch. Cough—cough! I had killed the engine. I pressed the starter button quickly. The starter whined for a few seconds and then the motor started. I hesitated momentarily to allow a silver-haired old woman to cross in front of my car. With a self-conscious glance in the rear view mirror, I hurried across the intersection and on down the boulevard.

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge

ROBERT MACK

Rhetoric II, Theme 13, 1947-1948

THE NORTHWEST PORTION OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON is divided in a north-and-south direction by the waters of Puget Sound, which separate an area of land about 80 miles in length and 90 miles in width from the rest of the state. This area, known as the Olympic Peninsula, is well provided with local highways, but Puget Sound effects a barrier between it and the rest of the state to the east. All travel to and from the peninsula is by means of ferries in the vicinity of Seattle and Tacoma or by highways around the southern end of the sound through Olympia.

Puget Sound in the vicinity of Tacoma is restricted at its narrowest point to a width of about 4600 feet in what is termed the "Tacoma Narrows." The bridging of the sound at this location as a means of more ready access to the Olympic Peninsula had long been proposed; however, because of the great depth of the water and the swiftness of the tidal currents, the cost of a bridge was an effective barrier to its financing, and all efforts of private individuals in this direction failed.

In 1937 the state legislature created the Washington Toll Bridge Authority with the power to finance, construct, and operate toll bridges. Applications were made to the Public Works Administration and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for apportioning costs. During the summer of 1938, the Toll Bridge Authority prepared detailed plans and specifications for the bridge and on November 25, 1938, concluded a contract for the construction.

The plans provided for a connection with the city streets in Tacoma on the east and with an existing highway system on the west. The bridge was to consist of a suspension structure with a total length of 5000 feet divided between a central span of 2800 feet and spans on each side of 1100 feet. Approaches and anchorages would bring the overall length to 5939 feet. A normal vertical clearance of 196 feet was allowed for navigation purposes. The structure was to have a two-lane roadway 26 feet in width with a four-foot, nine-inch walk along each side.¹

Construction was commenced on November 29, 1938, two days before contract negotiations were completed.² The first task confronting the bridge builders was to make an accurate survey to determine the location of the structure. Transits used in this survey read to ten seconds; that is, they

¹ Clark H. Eldridge, "Tacoma Narrows Bridge," *Civil Engineering*, 10 (May, 1940), 299.

² *The Failure of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge* (three separate reports compiled by Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University and issued as a bulletin, hereinafter to be referred to as *Texas Bulletin*, Report A, B, or C), Report B, 1944, p. 17.

could measure an angle as small as ten seconds. And chaining, or measuring, was done with steel tapes mounted on tripod bases with readings taken to one-thousandth of a foot. The final result of this accurate survey may be exemplified by noting that the final angles turned for the centers of the main piers varied only about one-quarter of one inch in distances ranging up to several thousand feet.³

The various components of the bridge were completed as follows: main piers, September 11, 1939; towers, January 6, 1940; cables, March 9, 1940; suspended steel, May 31, 1940; concrete roadways, June 28, 1940.⁴

Shortly before noon on November 7, 1940, the main span of the bridge, set in motion by the wind, ripped away and fell into the waters of the sound. Cables and towers survived and held up the side spans, though the latter sagged about thirty feet as the towers, which are fixed at the base by steel anchors deeply imbedded in the concrete piers, were bent sharply back by the unbalanced pull at the side span cables.

A wind reported as 42 miles per hour was blowing on the morning of the accident. Failure appeared to begin at mid-span with the buckling of the stiffening girders. Suspenders snapped and their ends jerked high in the air above the main cables, while sections of the floor system several hundred feet in length fell out successively, breaking up the roadway toward the towers until only stubs remained.⁵

As the twist approached its maximum, the deck tilted from side to side through vertical angles of more than 45 degrees with the horizontal; looking down the bridge lengthwise, one could see lighting standards on opposite sides of the deck at opposite ends of the bridge crossing at right angles.⁶

The first actual failure was due to the slipping of the cable band on the north side of the bridge. This slipping started torsional oscillations. These torsional movements caused breaking stresses at various points of the suspended structure, and further structural damage followed almost immediately. The dropping of the greater part of the suspended structure of the center span was made possible by the failure of the suspenders.⁷

Since the Tacoma Narrows Bridge was the third longest suspension span in existence (Golden Gate, 4200 feet; George Washington, 3500 feet),⁸ with a total cost of \$6,469,770,⁹ various detailed reports were made on the extent of damage to the structure. In the main they agreed quite closely. It was

³Fred C. Dunham, "Triangulation for the Tacoma Narrows Bridge," *Civil Engineering*, 11 (March, 1941), 145-6.

⁴*Texas Bulletin*, loc. cit.

⁵N. A. Bowers, "Tacoma Narrows Bridge Wrecked by Wind," *Engineering News Record*, 125 (November 14, 1940), 1.

⁶N. A. Bowers, "Model Tests Showed Aerodynamic Instability," *Engineering News Record*, 125 (November 21, 1940), 47.

⁷*Texas Bulletin*, Report B, Introduction.

⁸"Pacific Northwest Bridges Completed," *Engineering News Record*, 125 (July 11, 1940), 58.

⁹*Texas Bulletin*, Report C, p. 3.

recommended that the cables and the main towers be dismantled, but that the concrete piers be used again for they were in a satisfactory condition.

The unspinning of the main cables, a difficult job in itself, was further complicated by the fact that one strand had wound around the other strands during a wind storm and caused considerable friction in pulling operations. Fifty-two percent of the wire was removed speedily and with no great difficulty during the first month of operation, but three months were required to remove the remaining forty-eight percent. Tremendous forces of friction had to be overcome to remove much of the latter portion of cable. Deposits of zinc oxide, red lead, dust, and wax were continually being rubbed off the wire in the pulling process and were left on remaining strands. These substances, wetted by rain, formed a gummy compound which greatly increased friction. This condition was finally solved with the use of kerosene as a solvent.¹⁰

Dismantling the steel towers of the bridge could not be started until after the cables were down and out of the way. While the cables were being dismantled, a considerable amount of preparatory work in the manufacture of equipment, the placing of hoisting engines, and the construction of protection sheds was carried on. There were about 1900 tons of steel in each tower. Operations were started on the southerly or Tacoma tower first, and then the equipment was moved to the opposite tower, where the same procedure was repeated. Dismantling equipment was set on the first tower on March 15, 1943, and by May 11, the tower was down. The steel was removed at a rate of 235 tons per week. The equipment was moved to the second pier on May 18, and the actual steel removal was completed in thirty days, a rate of 750 tons per week.¹¹

After the unspinning of the main cables and the dismantling of the towers, the total value of the remaining portions of the structure was estimated at \$3,250,000. Included in this estimate were the main piers and those parts of the anchorages and the west approach which remained intact and could be utilized in a bridge of new design.

Starting with the old substructure, in which the main span would be 2800 feet, and following the principles established by wind tunnel tests to avoid objectionable vibration, a design was developed for a four-lane structure with a cable spacing of sixty feet. Although the cables of the original bridge were only thirty-nine feet apart, the tower legs were battered, and the spread at the base was fifty feet. The piers are long enough to accommodate the sixty-foot spacing of the new tower legs.

In the new bridge the greater weight of the superstructure (about fifty percent more than the original) will increase the foundation loads less than one

¹⁰ Charles E. Andrew, "Observations of a Bridge Cable Unspinner," *Engineering News Record*, 131 (August 26, 1943), 89-91.

¹¹ Charles E. Andrew, "Dismantling the Tacoma Narrows Bridge Towers," *Engineering News Record*, 131 (October 21, 1943), 92-3.

ton per square foot. Since both piers are founded on well-graded gravel and sand, such an increase will be of no consequence. Like the piers, the anchorages remained intact after the collapse, and a considerable number of them, at least sixty percent, can be used for the new superstructure.¹²

The various reports on the collapse of the bridge gave similar conclusions, the most noteworthy of which follow:

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge was well designed and built to resist safely all static forces, including wind, usually considered in the design of similar structures. Its failure resulted from excessive oscillations caused by wind action.

The suspension type is the most suitable and the most economical that could have been selected for the bridge. No more satisfactory location could have been chosen.

There can be no question that the quality of the materials in the structure, and the workmanship, were of a high order.¹³

¹² Charles E. Andrew, "Redesign of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge," *Engineering News Record*, 135 (November 29, 1945), 64.

¹³ *Texas Bulletin*, Report B, Introduction.

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Child at the Circus

A little boy stood wide-eyed in the midst of the circus activities. Large tents loomed grotesquely into the sky. The air smelled of taffy, popcorn, cotton candy, and splitting hot dogs. The sawdust covered the ground in heaps. The little boy turned, twisted, trying to take in all the sights at once. While the barkers yelled at passing customers, the child was fascinated by the merry-go-round. He watched other little boys mount the horses and wish around and around. Fumbling into his tight knee pants, he produced a dime and sauntered into the merry-go-round line. A smile of expectation crept across his face. In his eyes a bright light shone. When he reached the ticket office, the cashier leaned across the counter and said, "No colored allowed." The light died.—ROBERT LARUE

The Great Gatsby

By F. Scott Fitzgerald

ALEXANDER MONTO

Rhetoric I, Book Report, 1947-1948

FITZGERALD'S INTENTION IN *THE GREAT GATSBY* IS obviously to point up the futility of the life of the twenties through the portrayal of a man who lived futilely and died futilely. Since Fitzgerald himself lived in the period and absorbed its feelings and beliefs, his novel shows honesty of purpose and accuracy and fullness in performance. It is depressingly successful.

How, specifically, does he achieve his purpose? In the first place, to get a true portrayal of the period and to expound his theme, he uses a relatively simple plot that does not have a mass of complex adventures through which the hero goes, but, rather, relatively few incidents and an untwisted thread of action. By using the point of view of a character in the book, he achieves an air of reality for his almost incredible descriptions, such as that of the eyes in the oculist's advertisement. By using Long Island and New York as a setting, he makes scenes like Gatsby's parties and the desolate wastes along the railroad possible and believable. These points are important; for though a novelist of Fitzgerald's stature might have created such an effect in a different way in a different setting, yet they make this story seem more true and real. They also add to the style of the book because they make his portrayal intrinsic and apparent, not something so carefully contrived that the mechanism of the contrivance detracts from the central impression.

The power and comprehensiveness with which he depicts the period come from his marvelous characterizations, however; though a writer be ever so skilled, he cannot make a period come to life for the reader without making the people in it completely and credibly human. It is true that Fitzgerald's characters do not change much during the action; yet the space of a short summer that is the duration of the plot is scarcely enough to warrant any violent alteration of human beings. The book is written in the first person, the narrator being one Nick Carraway, who, of course, speaks for the author; and the characters develop through his understanding and are thus relayed to the reader. They are revealed by their speech and by comments from the author-narrator that are completely realistic and smooth-flowing and unmarred by unwieldy blocks of description or analysis.

The characters are complex. Take Tom Buchanan for example. His great brutality and drive, which would indicate a self-sufficient, skeptical mind, are coupled with a paradoxical credulity for the pseudo-scientific

theories of race dominance which he spouts at every opportunity. There's also Jordan Baker. What her next action will be is never obvious, and who understands her motives? These characters are real individuals and not wooden types, yet they have a curious universality. Who hasn't met an ex-football player like Tom Buchanan, "a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anti-climax"?

The first person narration, consecutive action, terse diction, and expressive language combine to produce that elusive something called style. It is this style which makes it impossible to read the book rapidly or aloud without destroying some of its highly personal effect. Clear and forceful, it expresses perfectly the thoughts of a bold and original thinker. Fitzgerald's grasp of his central idea unifies the style and makes it a fine tool with which to sketch his scenes.

As stated at the beginning of this review, the main significance of the book lies in its ability to make a departed and fabulous period live for us again, and also to show the futility of the life of this period. Of course, it is customary for the reviewer who wants to put his own views on paper to tack them on to reviews under the pretext of demonstrating the significance of the book he is discussing; but despite the danger of reading my own views into *The Great Gatsby*, I'll risk some comments on its significance.

That a period such as Fitzgerald recreates should ever have existed, much less existed only two decades ago, seems a bit fantastic today. The jazz age seems as remote as the Eocene. The flappers and jazz babies have fled with the rah rah boys, and all that comes back to us from that world is an echo of gay laughter and a flash of tinsel. What caused such a world to come into being? What was it worth? To the latter question Fitzgerald answers, "Nothing." Gatsby dies alone and is buried unmourned. His former splendor is forgotten, as he is. To the first question, the answers are too complex and numerous for anyone's understanding, not to mention descriptive powers; but one or two general causes can be touched upon.

As others have better stated, the early twenties were a period of disillusionment. The country had almost recovered from the war physically and economically, but there were other effects. The high ideals of Wilson and the altruistic aims of the war "to make the world safe for democracy" had been ripped to tatters in the shameful compromises of the peace of Versailles. The campaigns of the "muckrakers" had not so long before finished laying bare the corruption and baseness of politics and business. "Debunking" was the attitude most commonly expressed. People believed in nothing—but pleasure.

The economic answer is another that can be given. The reign of Queen Victoria ushered in a period of mechanization and industrial development that changed the whole pattern of economic life. This economic change also changed the social order, although the big break in prevailing social customs

and attitudes did not come until the First World War. After that, wealth and power brought their possessor social prestige also. The industrialization of our country brought about the shift of population to the urban industrial centers and so created huge, sprawling metropolises like New York, the setting of *The Great Gatsby*. The civilization of the age grew from these cities, and its wealth, power, and neurotic people were their products. Its prevailing philosophy, materialism, was a natural result of industrialization.

Thus *The Great Gatsby* gives us human beings who are helplessly caught in vast historic and economic forces in an era that lives for us again. No other novel I have read presents the period better.

A Ride in a Rodeo

RONALD PRESTON

Rhetoric I, Theme 5, 1947-1948

THE HOT RAYS OF THE SUN RESTED ON MY CHEEK AS I sat on the chute gate. For the past hour I had been watching men trying to stick to the slippery, eel-like back of a sun-fishing, pivoting, bellowing steer. Some of the men rode through the eight-second time limit. Some came limping back to the sidelines. Still others stood or lay in the arena with a dazed, surprised look on their faces; a leg or an arm, and sometimes both, hung queerly in their tight-fitting clothes. Others moved not at all, and the June dust settled slowly around their still forms.

Never before had I attempted to ride a steer. True enough, I had ridden a score of unbroken broncs, but still that wasn't like climbing aboard a wild long-horned steer, shipped straight from the plains of Wyoming or Nebraska. As I watched one of my best buddies thrown against the corral wall by a small but vicious steer, I heard my name called.

"You're next, buddy, chute number seven," said a tall, gangling figure standing below me.

I crossed over the chute to look at the steer I had drawn. Laughing Devil, the riders called him. He was a large, raw-boned animal with a loose, copper-colored hide that slid easily over his ribs and shoulders. His horns were about a foot and a half long—one curved down over a brown, ferocious eye, while the other stood straight up, like a finger pointing toward the sky and saying, "That's where you'll soon be, mister."

As I eased myself down in the chute, a hundred thoughts flashed through my mind. Would I be thrown and trampled or perhaps gored? I hoped not. Would it be easier than it looked? I fervently hoped so.

It wasn't the money that counted, but the feeling of exultation derived from doing something dangerous and exciting. Slipping lightly, oh, so lightly

on his withers, I trembled. I trembled not from fear, but in eager anticipation of the contest between brawn and skill.

The assistant handed me the sweaty, grime-hardened rope. I eased it under the steer's belly, and, running the end of the rope through the loop, I pulled it tight. A surprised grunt reached my ears as the steer expressed his feeling of outrage. I doubled the rope over my left hand and signalled that I was ready. Waiting for the chute gate to open, the steer remained disturbingly quiet, like the lull before the storm. Smelling the odor of his sweaty hide, mixed with that of the burned stubble fields and summer dust, I felt a deep satisfaction. As the chute gate opened, I felt the muscles under me suddenly grow as tight as a fresh-strung string of a banjo. Hitting the hard-packed earth like an exploding stick of dynamite, he went into a series of gymnastics I had believed impossible. He hit the ground at every conceivable angle, sometimes front feet first with the hind legs following, sometimes with the hind and front feet together, but always with a hard thump in his back to give me the benefit of every hard jolt. Going through his routine like a well-trained soldier, he sometimes emitted grunts and groans as I nearly became unseated at an especially clever trick. No wonder they call him the Laughing Devil, I thought, as I came close to hitting my head on his upturned horn. Suddenly he changed his tactics. From clean, fancy bucking he went into a whirl of side-jumps and buckling that made my insides feel like dirty clothes in a washing machine. He then started to sun-fish so violently I felt in another minute my neck would snap. Unexpectedly, tiredly, nearly subdued, he started to crow-hop, gradually quieting down to a stiff-legged run. At the end of the arena he stopped and expelled a great gust of air. Completely conquered, he stood with his head between his knees; his large pink nostrils contracted and expanded from the exertion like huge bellows. I slipped from his back, breathing heavily. Looking admiringly at his glistening hide and sweat-rimmed eyes, I felt great respect for his dynamic action and endurance.

As I walked back to the corral, I noticed the soft glow of the setting sun against the gold-rimmed clouds. Settling my aching muscles against the corral posts, I felt vividly alive and aglow with the supreme happiness that comes when a hard task is successfully accomplished.

Pin Ball Machine

Each player had his own technique of playing. One would shoot two or three balls at the same time; another, only one. Some released the stick with a sharp twist, thereby hoping to impart some "english" to the ball and make it hit more bumpers. But Sarge had his own manner of addressing the ball. He treated the little metal pellets as if they were human beings, and instead of slamming the plunger in to set up the ball, he would press it gently, talking to it all the time. He kept on talking to it as if he were speaking to a good friend, for only a good friend would stand for the language he used. The oddest part of the whole exhibition was that the balls seemed to act in almost precise accordance with his wishes, and by the end of the evening he had won more than twenty-five dollars.—JOHN SPIEGLER

Whaling in Our Time

DELMER MURPHY

Rhetoric II, Theme 7, 1947-1948

ALTHOUGH THE IMPORTANT USE OF WHALE BONE HAS disappeared since steel is now as flexible as and tougher than whale bone, whales are still hunted for many products. Ambergris, a material secured from the intestines of sick sperm whales, is used extensively today as a base or fixative in the most expensive perfumes.¹ Whale oil is probably the most important product, however, because there is so much of it. Low-grade oil, obtained from the boiling of the meat, is used in low-grade lubricating oils; while higher grades of oils, secured from the blubber, are used for preparing textile fibers for spinning, for treating leather, and in manufacturing soaps and candles.² A whale will yield about sixty-one barrels of these two grades of oils.³ Another important oil, found only in a cavity in the head of the sperm whale, is of very high grade, and is used as a base for face creams and for lubricating precision instruments such as watches, because it is not influenced by variations in the weather.⁴ Whale meat is used in many countries as a food. It was eaten even in the United States during the war; however, the most consistent users of whale meat are the Japanese, who have included it in their diet since their early history. There is no doubt that a whale supplies plenty of meat, for one tenderloin steak is twenty-five feet thick and weighs about fifteen tons.⁵

Whales are hunted with small, tug-like vessels called whale catchers or killer ships. The men aboard these small ships must be constantly on watch, for as a rule, whales are spotted while on the surface of the water. The whalers have two ways of spotting them: by their spout and by the noise accompanying this spout. Since whales are mammals, they must rise to the surface to breathe. The exhaled air, heavily laden with moisture blown into the cold air of the Arctic and Antarctic hunting grounds, is condensed into a cloud which is visible for many miles on a clear day. This blowing of air from their lungs is accompanied by a loud whistling sound which can be heard for great distances.⁶ Because normally the whale surfaces only every fifteen or twenty minutes,⁷ if a close lookout is not kept, a whale might pass by the ship unnoticed.

¹ R. C. Andrews, *Ends of the Earth* (New York, 1937), p. 33.

² "Thar She Blows," *Business Week* (July 21, 1945), 56.

³ E. H. Chatterton, *Whalers and Whaling* (London, 1925), p. 226.

⁴ "Thar She Blows," *loc. cit.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶ A. G. Bennett, *Whaling in the Antarctic* (New York, 1939), pp. 18, 89.

⁷ David R. McCracken, "My Four Months on a Jap Whaler," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 220 (August 23, 1947), 98.

With new uses of radar and other war equipment, the whale is not safe even beneath the water. The British, since the ending of the war, have equipped whale catchers with radar and sound echo sounding gear to help track him down both on the surface and under the water.⁸

After the whale has been sighted, it must be identified before it can be killed. Because of the new effective methods of finding and killing whales, regulations have been passed to prevent certain types from becoming extinct. The harpooner must not only be careful that he does not shoot a mother whale or her small calf, but he must also be able to judge length, for he is not permitted to kill a whale under seventy feet in length.⁹ He must also be careful not to shoot any of the protected species. Other whales he must leave alone because the oil they yield is of very poor quality and is not wanted by the processing plants. The men aboard the killer ships can distinguish among the different species of whales by the form and frequency of the spout and by the variation in its whistling sound.¹⁰

After the whale has been properly identified as one to be killed, the harpooner is in charge of guiding the ship to within shooting range, which is normally about twenty-five yards.¹¹ Every time the whale submerges, the harpooner must guess where he will come up next;¹² however, the harpooner does have an advantage in that during the chase a whale can stay under the water only two or three minutes at a time.¹³ Because of his keen hearing both on the surface and under water, the whale is able to outmaneuver the ship many times before exhaustion forces him to surface for more frequent and longer periods. Even after the ship is in a position for the strike, the hard part is yet to come. Only a ridge of the whale's back is visible as a target above the water; both the whaler and the animal are in constant motion; and if the unwieldy six-foot, one-hundred-pound harpoon even touches a wave on the way toward its mark, it will be thrown off course.¹⁴

When the harpoon strikes the whale, four prongs at the tip spring out to forty-five degree angles to fasten it firmly in the flesh. At the point of the harpoon is a bomb about one foot long which explodes approximately four seconds after it leaves the muzzle of the gun.¹⁵ Yet, despite the powerful force of the bomb, the first harpoon seldom kills, and a second, and sometimes a third harpoon has to be shot before the whale is hit in a vital spot.¹⁶ The first shot may stun, enabling the killer ship to come in for the kill, or again the harpoon may have no visible effect. When this happens, the harpoon serves as an anchor in the whale for the heavy rope attached to the ship. A

⁸ "Antarctic Whaling," *Life*, 21 (Sept. 30, 1946), 123.

⁹ McCracken, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 100.

¹⁰ James Travis Jenkins, *Whales and Modern Whaling* (London, 1932), pp. 18, 320.

¹¹ Chatterton, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

¹² "Antarctic Whaling," *loc. cit.*

¹³ McCracken, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁴ Bennett, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 167.

¹⁵ Chatterton, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

¹⁶ Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

large whale can tow the two-hundred-ton vessel for several miles before the ship can catch up and deliver the fatal blow.¹⁷

When the whale has been killed, the rope prevents it from sinking. The carcass is hauled to the surface; and, through a hollow lance driven into the whale, air is pumped into its stomach to make it buoyant. The catch is then marked by a lance bearing one or more flags to identify it, and cast loose.¹⁸ If a factory ship is working with the whale catcher, it will be notified of the dead whale's location. The factory ships are capable of pulling the whale on board and processing it just as shore factories do. If the killer ship is not working with a factory ship, the whales are picked up at the end of the day and towed into a shore processing factory.¹⁹

¹⁷ Chatterton, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁸ Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

¹⁹ Chatterton, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

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Method in His Madness

My father and I are thorough disbelievers in tourist guides, as we like to roam through new cities discovering the unusual for ourselves. So it was that we wandered into the beautiful French Catholic Cathedral in the French Quarter of New Orleans. We had noticed a little wide-eyed fellow of about six years following us. As we entered the church he stepped up and quietly informed us that we were in the Saint Louis Cathedral, second oldest church in the country, and wouldn't we care to look around? All of this was in one breath. Father and I listened to lectures concerning the beautiful murals, where each saint is buried, and how each of the exquisite stained glass windows happened to be made. Each lecture sounded suspiciously more memorized than the last, but nevertheless it was delivered with obvious earnestness. Father and I exchanged glances. We admired the hand-painted ceiling, and our little friend smiled. We praised the beauty of the architecture, and his eyes sparkled. We said we thought we would leave, and once again he was the wide-eyed little business man. Holding out his small, sweaty hand he announced, "That will be ten cents please. Merci."—DORIS DAVIS

Blue Nose

WILLIAM H. JACKSON

Rhetoric I, Theme 7, 1947-1948

BLUE NOSE," ALIAS "THE HATTER," WAS A REPRESENTATIVE of the kingdom of "the working man," of the phylum of the "laborer," and of the class of the "ranchhand"; he belonged to the family of "I ain't goin' to work," and he was of the species of "Gimme another drink."

No one knew where he was from, and when the question was put to him, he would whistle back through his tobacco-stained mustache the same reply, "From around these here parts some'ers." It mattered not where he was, for he gave the same answer in all sections of the country. Like many of his "brothers," he was from the "West," no matter how vast a territory the word took in. His birthplace was not marked by boundaries, and there was no certificate recorded to prove that he was alive. Many of his closest friends confided in me and swore that they did not know his name or his age. The only titles he went by were "Blue Nose" or "The Hatter." As for his age, I believe he must have been pushing sixty-nine into the next bracket. The origin of the name Blue Nose was obvious to all who knew him. As a matter of fact, a complete stranger could gaze upon his blue nose and brand him with the nickname. There must have been a tale behind the other alias, but I was not able to uncover one.

He bore the same appearance on all occasions, because to him there was no need of a new day or event. Since Blue Nose was always "carrying a load," his dirt-stiffened clothes kept him on his feet better than his legs could. I could never tell what color his shirt was; I believe at one time it must have been a red flannel. The hat he wore on top of the matted flea haven engulfing his head fitted the rest of his wardrobe. His denim trousers had never been introduced to the rub-board, and his shoes hid sockless feet. Blue Nose preached strongly against socks, staunchly declaring that they made the feet sore if worn too long. Rather than change socks once or twice a month, he completely avoided the ordeal by omitting them entirely.

I had the exclusive pleasure of meeting him through a bartender at the Old Faithful Saloon. I was not accustomed to frequenting such establishments, but because a friend of mine was working there, I felt it my duty to visit him whenever I was in the vicinity. When Duffy was busy, I helped him serve drinks at the bar. No experience was needed in mixing beverages; Duffy's customers drank straight whiskey, beer, wine, and tequila. I was introduced to Blue Nose during one such visit, and while I shook his right hand, he hastily downed a shot of tequila with his left.

After a few such meetings, Blue Nose and I became great friends—that is, friends as long as I supplied the “refreshments.”

He would relate to me the frontier days of his youth. A few times he would bless his mother, and sometimes he would tell snatches of his love life. As he talked, I would try to peer into his dim eyes and catch flashes of moods that the old man expressed. He always put on airs of happiness and contentment, but always I could detect the miseries that haunted his mind. Frequently, he said to me, “Kid, don’t you ever let yourself get as low and as filthy an old bum as me.” I would cheer him up by telling him that he had been unlucky and had received all the hard knocks in life.

He would panhandle many drinks during a good day, and on a bad day, when the men were out on jobs, he would resort to any means of obtaining more. Many of the young bucks would take advantage of this: They would throw him to the floor when he begged for a drink; sometimes, they would make him jig to a fast tune someone eked out on a jew’s-harp; they would tantalize him by making false promises of drinks. Blue Nose would sometimes jig endless numbers in frenzied desperation—many without music—to show his desperate need for “a little refreshment.” I never refused him, because I knew he could not survive without it. As a token of his appreciation, he would invariably offer me the jacket that someone had given him. The older fellows would always help him; there were no pranksters around while they were in his company. They formed a trust fund for him, and he was allowed five drinks a day and a place to sleep in Maw Brown’s Boarding House. He never bothered about having money for food, because he ate nothing.

During the last few weeks of his artificial world, Blue Nose was allowed his own way. It was common knowledge that he had been suffering from T. B., and the barroom doctors had declared he had but a short time to live. Blue Nose knew his time was near, and he actually set a day on which he would take his last breath. He packed more of his life into a few weeks’ time than he had experienced during the previous ten years. He even went so far as to talk about the casket he wanted and the plot of ground in which he wanted to be buried.

Everyone in the neighboring territory had heard of Blue Nose’s fate, and all of his friends from miles around came to see him. Each visitor would buy him a few drinks and try to collect old debts. I saw many leave with the honest impression that they had seen him for the last time. Strangely enough, his prediction was only four days late: he died from a stroke he had at Maw Brown’s Boarding House.

I was as sorry as anyone to see him go, for I had discovered he was a grand old man. We all agreed that Blue Nose would probably be happy, because he departed in the peak of his career.

On the Other Side

FRED W. STONE

Rhetoric II, Theme 9, 1947-1948

THIS MORNING WHEN I AWOKE I WAS IN A STRANGE new world. I was in a strange bed in a strange, lonely apartment, and, most amazing of all, my skin was brown. I strode rapidly to a mirror in the washroom and looked at myself. My hair was kinky, and my face was sepia. I was unmistakably a Negro. Through a slightly opened window I felt the damp miserable weather creep into the room, and I saw the green, green grass in the square below. "What hath God wrought?"

I descended the stairs slowly and stepped out into the drizzle. The cold wet air seeped into the very marrow of my bones. I turned up the collar of my topcoat, but the ever-moving dampness still slipped in against my brown skin.

In the meadows the grass was yet green.

Ahead I saw a small coffee and doughnut diner. The thought of hot coffee was good, and I imagined I could smell the seductive aroma of fresh coffee through the light rain. I walked in and sat on a stool near the door. The counterman came over, and I gave my order unconsciously, without looking up from the menu. He did not move. I looked up, and it was then I saw his face filled with contempt. He pointed to a greasy fly-specked card tacked to the wall. It read, "For Whites Only." I turned up my coat collar and left.

The day was a moment and an eternity. A hundred times I was humiliated, debased for my color with never a kind word, a soft look, a thank you given to balance, if ever so slightly, the hurt to my pride, the destruction of my ego. Everywhere I turned there were arrogant little signs: "Colored," "For Whites Only," "We reserve the right to seat our guests."

What have I done to deserve this? Can they not see that under this infernal brown coating I am as white as they are? Will they not give me one small chance to prove my worth? Why do they give me nothing but contempt?

Another little sign on the edge of town read, "This is Smithville—This is America."

As dusk fell I found myself in a park. I sat on a bench, too confused and bitter to think. A woman, a white woman, passed, and in passing dropped a small purse. I stooped to pick it up and heard her say, "Keep away from that, nigger." I could have killed her there, where she stood, without a qualm. She walked off as I stood rooted to the spot.

In the fields the grass was burning greener.

Hate? I never even dreamed it was possible to hate this much. They have taken everything I had from me, but they have given me in exchange a magnificent hate. I hate white. I hate everything the whites stand for, these smug insolent people. I hate the white men with their cruel eyes, and I hate their insipid women, those brainless, spineless animals who are assaulted the very moment they sit beside me on a train or a bus. To all these people I am fit only for exploitation. I have been degraded, scorned and humiliated, but I have this new-found love, hate. It sweeps over me in waves, hot, then cold. It goes from a cold, calculating fury to a burning, insatiable hate. I shall never be persuaded from it, for it is the only vestige of manhood I retain.

Fight? I will fight this thing until I die, for what else is there to live for? Indeed, is it not in the "American" spirit to fight oppression? I will fight it everywhere and to the death.

Will I ever become accustomed to this, to my abasement? Is it possible to become accustomed to the everlasting fires of Hell?

In the cemetery on the side of the hill the green grass speaks with its color.

The Scientist and Literature

WILLIAM W. VICINUS

English 62, ASTR, 1944-1945

IT SEEMS THAT I AM NATURALLY DRAWN TO SCIENCE. I am not unusual in this respect, for there are many in this complex world that find science stimulating, absorbing, and much easier for the precise mind than the arts. As a future scientist, however, I believe that it is absolutely necessary to study literature.

There is something in the make-up of each of us that refuses to be settled by the calculating efficiency of modern science. This blank spot is in part due to the complexity of man's mind. There is no formula for predicting thought. Although psychology has made advances in the analysis of human motives and can sometimes predict what form of action the motivation will take, the indisputable fact remains that no one has been able to harness capricious intelligence or emotion or plumb the depths of man's mind. Another factor that science has been unable to deal with is the soul. A few deny it; a few ignore it; but most consider it an imponderable essence in human behavior. The soul must be considered as a factor, for it jars the smooth development of reflective thought, and is a possible source of strange emotions with which science can not cope.

Science in itself can only point the way to a fuller knowledge and exploitation of natural phenomena. Coupled with a broader knowledge of man and his ways, it brings to the scientist a degree of genius and a capacity for better understanding. There is also the fact that science in itself has not been able to produce a way of life compatible with the average man's emotions. It has been truthfully said that the scientist leads a very boring life except in his work. He has little to speak about except his work and few to talk to except those in his field. Luckily, or perhaps inevitably, almost all great scientists have found that they work better if they have found a way to appreciate the other things in life.

One of the major "other things" in this life is literature. By literature I mean especially written works of fiction that have beauty either in construction or in thought, or both. I have found in literature a measure of relief for the torture that realization of the immensity of ignorance and the frailty of life brings with it. Literature provides insight into life from the observations of men of genius. It has the beauty of the mind that Keats felt so keenly and expressed in, "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." It has the power to inspire further efforts when life seems dark and but a stagnant pool in which we are left to drown amid putrid vapors. It can sway the mind and evoke multitudinous emotions. Ultimately I find in it a partial answer to the call of the mind and the spirit.

The only conclusion I can draw from these observations is that the study of literature is necessary for the more complete realization of the possibilities in life. It is a means to greater enjoyment and greater contributions and, as such, should be a major part of the scientist's life, since he needs great insight if he is to give his best to the world.

Port Said

HAWLEY SMITH

Rhetoric I, Theme 6, 1947-1948

FROM FAR OFF IN THE DISTANCE COME THE DEEP, melancholy whistles of unknown ships, sounding and signalling their way out to sea. Aboard these ships are men of every nationality, type of character, and degree of emotional stability. On their faces are traces of hatred and happiness, fear and confidence, repentance and indifference. These are the men who are leaving Port Said. I am the one who has left these impressions with them, cut like epitaphs on the tombstones of their memories. I am the soul and the body of Port Said. All who enter this port come as pawns to my chessboard.

The docks are still; the sea is preternaturally calm. Only the occasional splashes of refuse, or of something else no one can identify, breaks the tranquillity of the water. Then suddenly the sound of footsteps breaks into the night. The steps come slowly, firmly, yet with the unconscious timing of a large man. As he steps out of the criminal infested darkness, one is astonished to see that he is a complete contrast to those that live in the shadows about him. They are the unfortunates of the sea, cast ashore by the winds of destiny like the debris of a ship torn at sea; this man is dressed for some formal occasion. Perhaps it is a wedding. Maybe he has spent the earlier part of the evening in one of my cafes or roulette halls. Yes, that is it, a night with the betraying wheels of fortune. His face is that of a jade-cut idol, but his eyes are the eyes of Christ—eyes that see all, and yet see nothing; eyes wherein all can be seen, and yet everything can be hidden.

His shadow stretches farther and farther out along the quay as he approaches the small fan of light coming from a wharfside cabaret. Stopping to talk to no one, he proceeds to a table at the extreme end of the room. The waiter comes to him with the obsequious smile that is saved for sea captains and men of means. But when he sees the sharp-cut, death-like features of the stranger, he begins to tremble within himself. The waiter's usual brisk, arrogant attitude changes to a feeble request, "Would the Monsieur care to order?"

The Monsieur does not change the direction of his stare, nor does he change the expression of his face. But from somewhere within him comes a voice like the beating of waves at the side of a ship, like the voice of an inquisitor passing a sentence of death, like that of the innocent pleading guilty, like that of the guilty pleading innocent. The voice says, with a subconscious significance grasping every word, "I would like a glass of wine, red wine, from the bottom of the last barrel."

The wine is brought sooner than could be thought possible; it is set down in front of him. One hand moves; one coin drops. The hand calmly lifts the glass, and lips that seem to feel out the taste finish the wine, for it disappears into a mouth that does not open, past a heart that does not beat.

The unknown stands and walks toward the door. No one can explain why the crowd opens before him. The sailors look up soberly from their half-empty glasses. The women turn from their men. They know that he is in my power. They dare not touch him. He is like a leper without bells; he does not need them.

With his same firm, thoughtful steps, he walks down to the very edge of the water. In his fingers he holds the last cigarette of the last pack. The smoke rolls from his nostrils and enshrouds him in a semi-transparent mist.

The smoke clears; the cigarette has gone out. A pair of gloves, a coat, and a white silk scarf lie on the dock, bled of all human interest.

The sun rises over Port Said.

Rhet as Writ

Many people will refuse to fly in a plane because they are real sure that they will never land at the other end of their destination in one piece.

Another thirty minutes and the fudge is all gone eaten ate.

Racking my brain on all these thoughts plus my wife who is also added responsibility gave me the opportunity that was too good to think of turning down.

I have seen a crowd of thousands remain silent while a basketball player was shooting a fowl.

He had a harsh, vigorously cut mouth and lips, which could form themselves to sharp, contemptuous words as well as jests and rosy cheeks.

It has been stated that children are the rivets in the bonds of matrimony. My plan for 1958 calls for two rivets!!

In college much time is spent in deep consintration.

One girl wore an evening gown to a dance which hung much lower than her knees.

The movie has no moral significants to my story, no physiological meaning, only the one purpose—to admuse.

UnAmerican activities have reached the point where the average, honest citizen feels they should be controlled by UnAmerican laws.

In Arabia a man can have as many wives as he can handle.

This will help me reach my goal of being just as good a bachelor as my father.

The army has taken great pains to keep up these burial places. They have done a splendid job and there is no doubt that if these boys were alive today they would say, Thanks. Leave things alone while everything is all right.